UNITED NATIONS

General Assembly

FORTY-NINTH SESSION

Official Records

THIRD COMMITTEE
49th meeting
held on
Thursday, 1 December 1994
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 49th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. CISSÉ (Senegal)

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AGENDA ITEM 97: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.3/49/SR.49
15 December 1994

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

94-82593 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 97: ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (A/49/38 (Supplement No. 38), A/49/176, A/49/204-E/1994/90, A/49/205-E/1994/91, A/49/217-E/1994/103, A/49/287-S/1994/894 and Corr.1, A/49/308, A/49/314 and Corr.1, A/49/327 and Corr.1, A/49/349, A/49/354, A/49/365-E/1994/119, A/49/378, A/49/381, A/49/462 and Corr.1, A/49/506, A/49/532, A/49/587 and Corr.1; A/C.3/49/13)

1. Mrs. MONGELLA (Secretary-General of the Fourth World Conference on Women) said that the process of preparation for the Fourth World Conference on Women, which had aimed at stimulating discussion of critical areas of concern identified by the Commission on the Status of Women, had worked well. Over 150 Member States had established national preparatory committees and the Secretariat had received over 130 national reports. She was grateful to the United Nations institutions which had given countries technical and financial support and, through their participation in their specialized areas, contributed to greater inclusion at the grass-roots level. Non-governmental organizations had been instrumental in taking the issues to the general public and developing practical solutions.

2. The empowerment of women had recently emerged as a key issue for development, and women had demonstrated their enthusiasm and commitment to the Conference by attending national, regional and preparatory meetings in their thousands. All five regional plans or platforms for action were complete.

3. The advancement of women was still hindered by poverty, violence and lack of access to resources, education and health facilities, as well as an unacceptably low level of participation in decision-making. Since they bore the brunt of the consequences of economic policies and armed conflicts, women must have an active part in decision-making.

4. The functioning of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and of its monitoring body, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) were issues which must be dealt with at the Beijing Conference. In its report (A/49/38), CEDAW compared its working conditions with those of other human rights treaty bodies. The Convention restricted the Committee's meeting time, thereby limiting the number of reports that could be considered and constructively discussed, yet, although CEDAW had recommended an amendment to article 20 of the Convention to deal with the problem, States parties had taken no action. She suggested that the General Assembly might consider the recommendation.

5. The World Conference would undertake the second review and appraisal of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000, and the Commission on the Status of Women had accordingly selected the priority themes for its thirty-ninth session based on the criterion that they should contribute to the Conference and, in particular, to the draft Platform for Action for the Conference. Two of the themes - gender and education and training, and women and economic decision-making - had been developed at expert

group meetings in Turin and New York respectively, and a third meeting would shortly explore women's potential contribution to peace and security.

6. The report of the Secretary-General on violence against women migrant workers (A/49/354), the first of its kind on the issue, drew on various sources within and outside the United Nations system, including the Division for the Advancement of Women which had long been concerned with violence against women. Undocumented or illegal migrants were particularly vulnerable to violence, and trafficking in women and forced prostitution, both recognized as forms of violence against women, seemed to be growing. A variety of international instruments already provided legal protection for women migrant workers, but the subject needed further investigation and the report included various recommendations to that end.

7. The 1994 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development provided a factual basis for much of the Platform for Action for the Fourth World Conference on Women. It was structured around three themes - poverty, productive employment and women and economic decision-making - and a summary of its analysis could be found in document A/49/378.

8. The success of the World Conference would have to be measured by both process and product. One tangible result would be the text of the Platform for Action, but, in order for it to have any meaning it would be necessary to apply the lessons learnt from previous women's conferences. Little progress had been made in the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, for example, owing to an almost total lack of institutional and financial commitment.

9. As to process, the ideas and insights of non-governmental organizations, which had always participated actively in women's advancement - essentially a grass-roots movement - would be crucial to the overall success of the Conference. She welcomes the fact that many countries intended to include key non-governmental organizations in their government delegations. There would also be ample opportunities for discussion among themselves at the non-governmental organizations Forum which was also to be held in Beijing.

10. The Conference secretariat had been active in disseminating information through various media - electronic, print and, not least, word of mouth. The Department of Public Information was also issuing a range of information products. In conclusion, she thanked the United Nations Secretary-General for his unstinting support.

11. Mrs. HEYZER (United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)) said that UNIFEM, in representing the collective concerns of women, aimed to be a vehicle for change by shaping a women's development agenda for the twenty-first century. Such an agenda was not an agenda for women alone, but represented women's vision of how the global development agenda should be transformed.

12. The key challenges facing the human race as it moved towards the twenty-first century would decide its very survival. The feminization of poverty had

become a global phenomenon. Sustainable human development was inconceivable in an unstable situation where the costs and benefits of development were shared inequitably between men and women and the opportunities of half of humanity were jeopardized. The first challenge was thus to find more equitable approaches to development. The second was to ensure sustainable livelihoods in the face of environmental degradation. Women bore the brunt of that degradation, which was depleting the resource base of a still largely rural world where they were the main subsistence farmers.

13. Massive population movements within and between nations were affecting millions of people, particularly women. The third challenge was therefore to try to build stable lives in the midst of that process of flux. Lastly, women faced the challenge of coping with new conflicts caused by the collapse of old political structures. The challenges she had described were reaching disaster proportions, and crisis management was not an adequate response. Long-term strategies must be evolved for such challenges demanded new thinking in the light of what it meant for people to be caught in changes beyond their control.

14. The core of the women's development agenda for the twenty-first century was a vision of the political and economic changes that were needed to undo the mistakes of past development approaches and devise new strategies that promoted sustainable livelihoods and stable communities on the basis of gender equity and social equity for all sectors of society. The agenda sought to address contemporary challenges through a fundamental shift in development thinking that would redirect the patter and pace of economic growth and redistribute the costs and benefits in gender-equitable ways; through new modes of environmental and social sustainability that would result in sustainable livelihoods through gender-equitable access to resources; through social reintegration and the rebuilding of stable lives for women involved in population movements; and lastly, through the protection of women in conflict situations.

15. That agenda was based on a principle of social justice that addressed women's livelihood needs in terms of their entitlement to and control over resources. It was the UNIFEM charter for action as a vehicle of change to transcend the despair, tired cynicism and hopeless inertia that stopped constructive efforts before they even began. The Fund's priority concern would be to address critical issues pertaining to women's livelihood and empowerment, including basic needs, rights and responsibilities; economic globalization and restructuring; ecology and sustainable livelihoods; population displacement and international migration; gender relations and women's status; and peace and social safety. UNIFEM was thus responsive to both women and Governments and aimed to bring together all efforts to create a more secure world. It sought to contribute to processes that would strengthen women's agenda for change, while facilitating their input into the promotion of good governance, greater accountability and a new ethic based on secure livelihoods.

16. UNIFEM was seeking to develop explicit linkages between the recommendations and strategies emanating from the five major United Nations conferences held in the first half of the 1990s. It was crucial that the momentum built at Rio, Vienna and Cairo should be sustained through Copenhagen and Beijing. The

Beijing Conference offered an opportunity to declare a women's development agenda for the twenty-first century that would critically address the development processes which had such an impact on everyone's lives.

17. As an autonomous United Nations agency that had grown out of the international women's movement, UNIFEM worked closely with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). It was thus able to impart a gender perspective to key development issues and to act as a catalyst for gender-responsive change.

18. At the Fourth World Conference on Women, there would be a collective call for accountability on the part of decision makers in both the public and private sectors, and a collective demand that substantial resources be invested to translate words into actions of benefit to all. In that connection the funding currently allocated to UNIFEM was insufficient to meet the needs of the 2.5 billion women in the world and she urged Governments to give the Fund greater financial support.

19. Ms. SOLTAN-MOHAMMADI (Focal Point for Women, Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM)), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/49/587), said that the report was a departure from the usual progress report because it included a strategic plan of action for the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (1995-2000). The strategic plan of action not only replaced the ineffective current Action Programme but also formulated a vision and identified practical steps to help the Secretariat reach a 50-50 gender balance by the year 2000. Its objectives had been translated into a succession plan based on attrition and the expected number of vacancies likely to occur during the period, with specific annual targets and percentages for the levels P-1/2 to Under-Secretary-General. The succession plan was supported by a well articulated implementation plan that touched upon every area relating to the status of women.

20. The strategic plan's success was contingent on the availability of data for forecasting and management decision-making, an accessible OHRM database, planning to make the process more proactive, communication to involve management and staff in the plan, accountability and awareness to ensure that everyone contributed to equality goals, a trend-analysis report to measure the managers' success or failure in implementing the plan, and training to improve the management culture to support the plan. The fact had to be faced that a larger proportion of the limited number of posts subject to geographical distribution and likely to become available during the period of the plan must be filled by women. That would require a coordinated effort throughout the Secretariat, with the support of Member States.

21. One important feature of the plan was its treatment of issues related to the achievement of numerical targets, such as career development, training, organizational development, reform of recruitment and promotion, monitoring, accountability and maintenance of the plan. Developing the strategic plan of action had served to reaffirm the Secretary-General's conviction that the status

of women in the Secretariat could not be treated in isolation from the crisis of human resources development and management issues facing the Secretariat.

22. In order to implement the plan, it was necessary to have a larger pool of experienced and qualified women from which to draw. There was a need to overcome bureaucratic hurdles in the Secretariat and elsewhere and to provide a worthwhile career path both for women already employed in the United Nations and for prospective women employees.

23. The section of the report on implementation of the plan specified a number of strategies to be adopted. Unless the strategic plan and the Focal Point received funds and support in kind from Member States, however, those strategies like previous ones, would remain unimplemented. The participation of women, in sufficient numbers and at levels that made a difference in the work of the United Nations, was no longer merely an equality or a gender issue. It was fundamental to shaping the role of the United Nations in fulfilling its Charter. Women were demanding to be a part of international decision-making on issues that affected present and future generations. Achieving better representation of women was a shared responsibility that required commitment and resources. At the United Nations, the Secretary-General would ensure commitment to the proposed strategic plan of action by the administration, OHRM and senior management. The Member States were requested to support those efforts by proposing qualified women for vacancies, especially at high levels, facilitating communication between women and the Secretariat, and pledging human and financial resources to the Secretariat.

24. Mrs. ALVAREZ (Dominican Republic) said that the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) had carried out a number of substantive programmes in the areas of data collection and analysis, dissemination of gender-disaggregated data, improved methods for statistical data collection and processing, development of a methodology for evaluating women's work and use of time, and gathering of information to analyse the situation of elderly migrant and refugee women, and widows. In view of the proposal to merge INSTRAW and UNIFEM, she wondered whether drastically restructuring the Institute, the only one engaged in research and training for the advancement of women, would help rationalize its work, or whether it would instead serve short-term individual interests at the expense of the long-term global needs of all women, particularly in developing countries.

25. It was not that her delegation was opposed to the restructuring of INSTRAW. It believed, however, that the process should be more transparent and that INSTRAW should be given a clear and more coherent mandate in order to promote the search for lasting solutions to the problems of hunger, underdevelopment, extreme poverty and social injustice, not to mention the maintenance of peace and global problems. In that connection, she stressed that institutions which implemented technical and financial cooperation programmes must be separate from those involved in policy-making and coordination.

26. Her delegation was particularly concerned at the unorthodox way in which the Secretariat had dealt with the proposed merger. It had not even observed the most basic rules of the Organization. In that connection, she stressed the importance of full compliance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1994/51 and General Assembly resolution 48/114. The latter had made a number of recommendations which had not been followed up. Two reports, on ensuring that the mandate of INSTRAW was retained and on the interaction between the Institute, UNIFEM and other relevant United Nations bodies respectively, had been requested but had not been made available. The report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) on the financial implications of the merger (A/49/365-E/1994/119) must also be carefully considered before any decision was taken.

27. INSTRAW and UNIFEM had both made valuable contributions to the advancement of women. However the proposal to merge them was drastically affecting the Institute's work, not least because several substantive posts had not been filled, while UNIFEM was fully staffed. That INSTRAW staff had managed to work under such conditions was indeed commendable. However, if that situation continued, INSTRAW would no longer be able to implement its mandate properly, to the detriment of women everywhere, particularly in developing countries.

28. Her Government attached great importance to the activities of INSTRAW, whose data collection and statistics on women had paved the way for the work of UNIFEM and other relevant United Nations bodies. The Institute's mandate remained as valid as it had been in 1975. Any decisions on its future should therefore reflect the shared responsibility of Member States for building peace and social progress, rather than short-term individual interests. She hoped that the two draft resolutions on the subject, sponsored by the Latin American and Caribbean Group and the Group of 77 respectively, would be adopted by consensus.

29. Mrs. PILOTO (Zimbabwe) commended the Secretary-General of the Fourth World Conference on Women on the preparations under way for the Conference, as well as on her personal efforts to mobilize funds and create awareness among Governments. Her delegation was confident that the preparatory work and the inputs at all levels would be productive. In that connection, she expressed appreciation for the assistance provided in the region by UNIFEM and hoped that donor countries would continue to be generous in their support for the fund.

30. Modest progress in implementing the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies had been made in some areas; most Governments had adopted legislation to promote the status of women; more women had been appointed to positions of authority and efforts had been made to encourage the education of girls. Her delegation was none the less concerned that little had been done to consolidate those successful initiatives.

31. She stressed the importance of support mechanisms to help women operate successfully in positions of authority, since their appointment to such positions did not always meet with the approval of colleagues in traditionally male-dominated environments. Irrespective of her qualifications, a woman was

often not treated equally and suffered various forms of professional harassment. The mechanisms set up to deal with sexual harassment were commendable, but further efforts were required to consolidate women's professional status in society. For instance, Governments could organize forums to discuss women-related problems in the workplace. Greater awareness should be created among women and society at large about local and United Nations programmes aimed at the advancement of women.

32. In Zimbabwe, the mass media had been used to inform all sectors of society about relevant Government programmes. The President had also actively promoted equity and equality between men and women. While there was still room for improvement, considerable progress had been made since Zimbabwe had gained independence.

33. Women must also organize themselves to fight against discrimination, for those who had traditionally oppressed them would not willingly give up their privileged status. In their policies for the advancement of women, Governments must encourage women to rise to the challenge, without necessarily antagonizing their male counterparts in the process.

34. The needs of women outside the mainstream, such as school dropouts or adult women who wished to continue their education but lacked the infrastructure to do so, had often been neglected. They should be given attention in preparing the Platform for Action for the Beijing Conference. Her delegation was ready to share its experience in that area, particularly on the question of gender-sensitive education.

35. Mr. FITSCHEN (Germany), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the Union attached particular importance to four issues relating to the advancement of women: the elimination of discrimination and violence against women; the institutional framework within the United Nations system for the advancement of women; the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies; and preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women.

36. In recent years, the workload of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) had increased considerably, due to the growing number of States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. As a result, the time-lag between the submission of reports and their examination by CEDAW was as much as three years. The Committee's task of drafting suggestions and general recommendations on the basis of those reports had also become increasingly important. Its recent general recommendations on violence against women and equality in marriage and family relations provided useful guidance for the implementation of the Convention.

37. It was clear from the report of the Secretary-General (A/49/308) that CEDAW had less time to devote to the tasks assigned it than other treaty bodies with a comparable mandate. The European Union was concerned that the consideration of reports might become a pro forma exercise which would not allow for the type of intensive dialogue with Governments that was customary for treaty bodies and was

vital in the case of CEDAW since the Convention covered a wide range of issues. The workload of CEDAW might increase further if the proposal in the Vienna Declaration to introduce a right of petition was implemented. Steps must be taken to ensure that CEDAW had adequate meeting time and the necessary resources to fulfil its mandate under the Convention.

38. One further concern was the extensive reservations to the Convention. According to article 28, a reservation incompatible with the object and purpose of the Convention should not be permitted. In that connection, he recalled the recommendation issued by the World Conference on Human Rights that States should limit the extent of their reservations to human rights instruments.

39. The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women had been one of the major achievements of the forty-eighth session of the General Assembly. He welcomed the appointment of a special rapporteur on violence against women and looked forward to her recommendations for practical measures to eliminate such violence and its causes and consequences.

40. The proposed merger of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) might offer a way of strengthening the United Nations capacity for activities relating to the advancement of women, provided that certain conditions were met. However, the legal, financial and administrative implications of such a merger required further clarification and discussion. The European Union intended to participate in the ongoing consultations under Economic and Social Council resolution 1994/51, so that the General Assembly would have all the necessary information to take an informed decision at its fiftieth session.

41. The Fourth World Conference on Women to be held at Beijing should build on the outcome of other recent United Nations conferences that had addressed issues of importance to its thematic focus, such as the International Conference on Population and Development and the World Summit for Social Development. The European Union had participated actively in the ECE High-level Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Beijing Conference, which had adopted a regional platform for action aimed at achieving, by the year 2000, a more equitable and sustainable society that took women's knowledge, potential and contributions into account in all policy- and decision-making. To that end, the Meeting had identified certain principles on which any action for the advancement of women should be based. The regional platform had also proposed strategic objectives which, in the view of the European Union, should also be reflected in the Platform for Action to be adopted at Beijing. Those objectives focused on promoting the advancement and empowerment of women in all areas of public and private life.

42. The Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies were being implemented in the European Union, as could be seen from the introduction of important legal provisions and other measures to promote equal opportunities for women. Those measures made a significant contribution towards achieving real equality of opportunity for women within the European Union. Turning to the Platform for

Action to be adopted at Beijing, he said that its objectives could not be attained by Governments, the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations alone, but would require action by society at large and each individual in it.

43. Mr. FLORES OLEA (Mexico), speaking also on behalf of Colombia and Venezuela, said that the Fourth World Conference on Women would provide a further opportunity for promoting the advancement of women: many of the obstacles identified at the 1975 Women's Conference had yet to be overcome, and the goals set by the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies remained valid.

44. The Beijing Conference was particularly important since it coincided with renewed interest in respect for human rights, including women's rights. He was pleased to note that the convening of the Conference had led to resource mobilization and greater awareness of women's issues at both the national and the international level. Moreover, the regional preparatory meetings had highlighted the need for greater flexibility in the decision-making process.

45. Although significant progress had been made, particularly with regard to equality before the law and education and training for women, there were differences among the regions. Moreover, many of women's most pressing problems remained unsolved. The Platform for Action must therefore reflect the international community's commitment towards ensuring dignity, equality and equity for women in the coming years.

46. Some of the most critical issues to be taken up at the Conference were: the eradication of poverty; an equitable share for women in the responsibilities for and benefits of economic and social development; equitable participation by women in decision-making and positions of authority in the public and private spheres; efforts to combat violence against women; and respect for and the promotion of their human rights. Those concerns were reflected in the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean 1995-2001 adopted by the regional preparatory meeting held recently in Argentina. The Programme recognized that structural inequalities between men and women persisted in the region and that educational systems perpetuated gender stereotypes. One of the region's objectives was to ensure the full integration of women into public life, not only to meet their own needs but for the benefit of society as a whole. The growing number of women in the workforce was a key factor for development, but social structures such as child-care facilities must be improved to enable them to reconcile their productive and reproductive roles so as to develop their full potential.

47. With regard to violence against women, Mexico, Colombia and Venezuela had worked to secure the adoption, in June 1994, of an inter-American convention on the subject, which reflected the region's firm commitment to full observance of the rights and fundamental freedoms of women.

48. Although almost two thirds of the Member States had become parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, significant efforts were needed to ensure its full implementation. The

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women must be given increased resources and support in order to perform its functions properly. Due attention should also be paid to women migrant workers, who were a particularly vulnerable group. In that connection, he drew attention to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, which contained specific guidelines on the subject.

49. The forthcoming session of the Commission on the Status of Women was an especially important stage in the preparations for the Beijing Conference. He urged all delegations to participate actively in the Commission's work, in a spirit of cooperation, with a view to reaching agreement on the document to be adopted at the Conference. Although the integration of women would ultimately benefit social and economic development, the primary objective of equality between the sexes was to ensure due respect for human dignity. A better understanding of the fact that women's rights were inherent and inalienable would further their advancement in society.

50. Mr. TUCKER (Bahamas), speaking on behalf of Suriname and the States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) which were Member States of the United Nations, said that the Fourth World Conference on Women afforded an opportunity to scrutinize the progress made in achieving full equality for women, with a view to taking appropriate further action. While he was pleased that considerable system-wide attention had been devoted to the preparatory activities for the Conference, he believed that some agencies and departments could do more. He also urged a careful system-wide examination of all programmes, with a view to ensuring that gender issues were properly incorporated in them.

51. A number of useful proposals had emerged from the Eighteenth Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Meeting on Women, and he agreed that consideration should be given to regularizing the Meeting's status as a follow-up to the World Conference. He supported the strategy of ensuring that youth concerns were taken into account throughout the Conference preparatory process, as well as the appeals made for contributions to the Trust Fund for Conference preparations. He was particularly concerned to ensure that all developing countries were represented at the Conference, since the severe economic constraints they faced often meant that they were unsatisfactorily represented at conferences and preparatory meetings.

52. In the context of the preparations under way in his own region, a platform for action had been formulated that highlighted concerns relating to the status of women in the Caribbean subregion. A resolution had been adopted aimed at granting observer status at the Beijing Conference to associate members of regional economic commissions, bearing in mind that the countries concerned had enriched and broadened the debate at previous world conferences.

53. The Fourth World Conference on Women was an important follow-up to the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. There were still numerous barriers to women's participation in decision-making, despite significant advances in the status of women worldwide. He therefore supported the preliminary conclusion,

contained in document A/49/349, that additional strategies were needed to ensure that women were fully empowered to participate at all levels of society without restriction. He welcomed the efforts to reflect gender-sensitive concerns in the final documents of recent international conferences, in particular the inclusion of gender-specific recommendations in the Programmes of Action adopted at the recent Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and at the International Conference on Population and Development. He hoped that no effort would be spared in translating those recommendations into reality. He was also pleased that the Department of Public Information was focusing attention on gender issues and that the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) was carrying out its advocacy role in that connection effectively. The fact that UNIFEM expected its funding to remain strong at a time when contributions to development activities were dwindling was an indication of countries' confidence in it.

54. He had been gravely concerned to note from the report of the Secretary-General on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/49/587) that the targets set for the advancement of women in the upper echelons of the Secretariat would not be met by 1995. He was also disturbed by the unacceptably low number of women from poorly represented and developing countries, and hoped that the strategic plan of action contained in the report would be implemented. As for the appalling statistics on the representation of Caribbean women in the Secretariat, he hoped that greater efforts would be made to ensure that those statistics improved in the future. Lastly, he supported the request that the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women be allocated more time for its work and stressed the importance of remaining clearly focused on the desired goals, with a view to ensuring continued progress in the advancement of women.

55. Mr. BUTLER (Australia), speaking also on behalf of Canada and New Zealand, expressed disappointment that, since its inception, the United Nations had consistently failed to reflect in its composition the fundamental principle of the equal rights of men and women by fully utilizing the talents of half the world's population, thereby setting an example to the world. Although the overall target for women's participation in the Secretariat by 1995 was close to achievement, the same was far from true of the target for senior posts, where women were very unevenly distributed. Moreover, women were still heavily clustered in subordinate positions. The pursuit of numerical targets was not sufficient; the issue should be approached within an overall context of human resources planning and management which would include a better working environment for women.

56. He was pleased, therefore, that many of the shortcomings identified by the Joint Inspection Unit in its report (A/49/176) would be addressed in the fundamental management reforms to be introduced in 1995. He also hoped that the strategic plan of action for the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (1995-2000) would result in equitable employment practices and reduce barriers to the advancement of women in the Secretariat. Better results would be achieved once responsibility and accountability were demanded directly from identifiable organizational units and officials.

57. He welcomed the development of a comprehensive career development system for all staff. Experience had shown that a merit-based promotion and placement system ensured that efficiency and effectiveness were key elements in the selection process. He recommended the development and implementation of an equal employment opportunity policy in recruitment and selection processes, which would ensure that managers were held accountable and would signify a clear and committed policy direction on personnel practices. He would also welcome the elaboration of strategies for addressing work- and family-related issues and the improvement of grievance redress systems. In view of the need to take urgent and practical steps at all levels to achieve the goal of implementing the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies, the credibility of the United Nations would be jeopardized if it failed to take the lead in the implementation of policies for the advancement of women.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.